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19 February 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, PC SURVEY GROUP

SUBJECT: Aspects of Covert Operations Capabilities

1. This is responsive to the undertaking of each member of the Group to provide a check list of those factors which should be first considered by the Group in a comprehensive consideration of the capabilities of CIA for the planning and execution of covert operations in support of U. S. interests.

2. It seems to me that in the early stage of our consideration we must reiterate the excellent statement of the function of the PC Survey Group contained in paragraph 1 in which it states that the group will undertake such investigations, studies and inquiries as necessary to provide it with a basis for evolving the national covert contribution to national security. We have heretofore not been permitted the time to arrive deliberately at a considered role in this respect. Undoubtedly this is partially because a process of education had to be gone through first. It may very well be that such education and inter-play as between our own organization and our mentors shall have proceeded sufficiently far by now as to enable this group to reach some firm conclusions as to the appropriate role of the covert operations service. This in turn may result in a far reaching increase in effectiveness.

3. It seems to me that we might well consider the following kinds of issues before deciding upon any definitive studies:

a. Current capacity versus current obligations.

(1) In what manner do we receive requirements for current operations and what is the nature of requirements given us?

(2) Are these usually related?

(3) Do the area divisions seek or propose operations to the Defense and State Departments for assignment or approval? To what extent do these kinds of proposals add to the load?

(4) How much of

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(4) How much of our total current load is received through the Consultants?

(5) Are our current obligations to some extent mutually exclusive; that is, do loads imposed with respect to one geographic area also impose loads on other parts of the organization?

b. What is the single most effective operation which if supported by all our capacity could, in our opinion, be made highly significant?

c. Does a difference of opinion as between ourselves and our mentors exist as to appropriate and effective types of covert operations? If so, is it our practice to emphasize those operations which we consider effective and to slight other types of operations?

d. If we were to terminate immediately those operations which we could all agree fall in the last 10% of all current operations from the standpoint of desirability and effectiveness, would the resultant savings in capacity result in significant increases in effectiveness elsewhere?

e. Preparation for future capacity and capability by its nature must interfere with capacity to execute current operations. What kind of standing ground rule can we agree as between priorities for current and future capacity anticipating:

(1) War within five years,

(2) No war within five years?

4. Since late in 1948 when we first started operations on a very small scale we must have learned a great deal about effectiveness and results. Much of this information will not have been collated. Would it not be possible to consider operations from the standpoint of load on this headquarters and on our field stations in conjunction with what we could agree outcome and effect? The purpose of this would be to enable us to de-emphasize those operations of relative less effectiveness. We would do this regardless of their excellence as covert operations.

5. The above questions can be expanded upon in discussion. I can sharpen them considerably when the direction of our concern becomes more apparent.

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1 - Addressee
2 - SAR
2 - SD/RE

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ABSTRACT

Suggests issues to be studied by the OPC Survey Group before reaching firm conclusions about the appropriate role of the covert operations "service". Such issues include studies of effectiveness, capability, guidance and directives from higher echelons, use of current capabilities for present vs. future contingencies.

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